WINDSOR TOWN FORUM

Wednesday 31 May 2023

Present**:** Councillors Alison Carpenter (Chair), Amy Tisi (Vice-Chair), Wisdom Da Costa, Neil Knowles and Mark Wilson

Also in attendance: Councillor Devon Davies

Also in Attendance (Virtually): Councillor Karen Davies

Officers: Laurence Ellis

Officers (Virtually): Andrew Durrant

Apologies for Absence

No apologies were received.

Declarations of Interest

No interests were declared.

Minutes

The Chair went through the actions from the last meeting.

ACTION: Andrew Durrant to investigate the 'Welcome to Windsor' sign near the Long Walk.	Andrew reported that the Borough was looking into this as well as some other signs in similar condition. A recent budget provision would allow enhancement of some aspects around Windsor. While it could not be resolved before the Coronation, the Borough was working on it in 2023. Andrew Durrant added that there needed to be discussions with the Rotary Club which approved the funding and support of the signs.
ACTION: Vision for Windsor to be an almost regular item on the agenda.	The Chair informed that Vision for Windsor was not added to the meeting agenda as there are already many items. However, she stated that an update could be added to the agenda for the next meeting in July 2023.
ACTION: Andrew Durrant to disclose the costs of the Vision for Windsor.	Andrew Durrant informed that the cost was around £60,000 for the project to date. A few months ago, a Cabinet paper on the project's provisional budget was approved.
ACTION: Consultations to be added to the next agenda.	Consultations had been added to the meeting agenda.

The Chair raised a question from the minutes of the last meeting who was responsible for clearing up litter along the motorway slip roads. Andrew Durrant, Director of Place, replied that he was uncertain as some of the responsibilities fell outside of the Local Authority, and therefore he needed liaise with National Highways. He suggested that he could discuss with Alysse Strachan, Head of Neighbourhood Services, and forward a written response to the Forum.

ACTION: Alysse Strachan, Head of Neighbourhood Services, to provide a written response to explain who was responsible for clearing up litter along the motorway slip roads and forward a written response to the Forum.

AGREED UNANIMOUSLY: That the minutes of the meetings held on 20 March 2023 were a true and accurate record.

Windsor Events and Projects

Andrew Durrant informed that his agenda item had been combined with 'Item 5 – Town Manager Update' due to Paul Roach, Windsor Town Manager, being unavailable to present the item. He presented a PowerPoint.

Andrew Durrant gave a quick update on Operation Golden Orb (code name for the Coronation). A multi-agency event, it involved the Borough, Department of Culture, Media and Sport, Thames Valley Police, the BBC and the Royal Household. He reported that the event went well.

Councillor Knowles highlighted that there was an issue with ticketing due to the Windsor area having poor Wi-Fi. Andrew Durrant acknowledged this and that issues around Wi-Fi remained in spite of external partners bringing in some additional Wi-Fi capacity into the footprint. He added that this was a takeaway for future events and something for the Borough to work on.

(Councillor Wisdom Da Costa entered the meeting at 6:46pm)

Andrew Durrant moved onto the Castle Hill Public Ream Project which was underway. It was primarily funded by the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and CIL. It will provide a more pedestrianised area around Castle Hill, improve the pavement and reduce vehicle activity. On the whole, the intention was to promote and prioritise pedestrians.

Jess Hunter, a resident from Park Street, asked if there was any consideration on the project potentially creating a one-way street, expressing concern on traffic flows and restriction of travel for cars. Andrew Durrant replied that this was not something he was aware on; but he stated that he would speak to the Infrastructure Team to see if the issue was being considered and forward an answer to Jess Hunter. He added that traffic flows and impact would have been considered.

Reiterating Jess Hunter's point, Louise Wilson, a resident from Park Street, raised the issue of traffic, parking, high pedestrian activity, partially caused by poor signage, and the potential danger this could cause. She stated that action was needed to resolve this. Andrew Durrant replied that there was no traffic going through the area as it was a construction site at the moment. Once this was done, there would be controls on vehicle access during the day and visitor hours to Windsor Castle, but there would be increased access around Castle Hill outside of the visitor hours which would help mitigate to mitigate traffic flow issues. He said that he could forward an answer to Louise Wilson alongside Jess Hunter.

ACTION: Huw Jones, Traffic Safety Manager, to be asked to forward details regarding concerns on traffic flow relating to the Castle Hill Public Ream Project to residents.

Continuing his presentation, Andrew Durrant explained that the work phases would continue throughout the year with a construction break in July and August. The project was expected to be completed in February 2024.

Councillor Wilson asked if there was any cost to RBWM on top of the funding for the Castle Hill project; and if the two sources of funding from LEP and CIL could have been applied to another area. Andrew Durrant replied that the funding coversedthe full cost in delivering the project and the funding was specifically for the project.

On Windsor Footbridge, Andrew Durrant informed that a budget and further funds from the Windsor Welcome project were secured to completely refurbish the Windsor Footbridge, including a redecoration and refurbishment of the green steelwork, the lifts and roof structure of the walkway. There were some delays to due to complex agreements and approvals with Network Rail. In addition, the scaffolding contractor stepped away from project which meant that a new scaffolding design had to be created and approved by Network Rail. The final scaffolding plan was close to being signed-off; from there, the project would begin.

Councillor Tisi, Vice-Chair, asked if the Windsor Welcome project included more than just the Footbridge. Andrew Durrant replied that the project did cover more areas and funding had been allocated, such as improved signage, car parking areas and generally enhance the 'lack of care' areas.

Zoe Binnie, a resident, asked if the renovations would encompass the opposite side of Goswell Hill, such as the Roadway Arch and Pedestrian Arch. Andrew Durrant replied that the project only focused on the green steelworks, walkway, stairways and lift. Zoe Binnie then asked how this could be looked at. Andrew Durrant answered that it would come under wider project work for the area. He added that there was a lot of work to do across Windsor and the objective was to prioritise and secure as much external funding as possible so that these projects could be realised. He suggested Zoe Binnie could email him and he could then inform her on this outside of the meeting.

ACTION: Resident to email Andrew Durrant who would then forward information on project works around Goswell Hill.

Andrew Durrant then briefly explained that monolith-like wayfinders across Windsor were being improved upon through external funding. He then covered footfall over the 12-month period with a slight increase in visitors and parking.

Councillor Wilson raised the issue of the flow of visitors moving in and out of Windsor. Andrew Durrant responded that he would pick this up with the team.

John Webb, a resident, asked if there was any budget available to improve neglected road signs across Windsor alongside the wayfinder improvements, claiming that there were signs across Windsor which have been reported for repair but were never refurbished. Andrew Durrant replied that the best that could be done was to keep a priority list within the Council team to try to address as many of these signs as possible. He added that he was open to reports on issues in Windsor being forwarded onto him to ensure the Council team had it on their list of tasks.

Councillor Wisdom Da Costa asked a couple of questions. Firstly, he asked how visitor numbers were calculated and why the business numbers have dropped below previous years for the first quarter of April 2023 in the build-up to the Coronation. Secondly, in relation to the Welcome to Windsor Fund, he asked if there was a possibility to open up access to the coach park from the Footbridge to The Arches to reduce travel distance.

Andrew Durrant replied that the units in the The Arches had car parking spaces and provisions. He was uncertain about accessibility but stated he would look into this. He then explained that the footfall was calculated by counters across Windsor. However, a more sophisticated method was being implemented with a package called Customer Insights which would use mobile and digital intelligence to track movements. He also expected a higher footfall figure in May 2023 due to the Coronation. He also stated that Paul Roach and his team would have more in-depth knowledge of how footfall figures worked.

ACTION: Andrew Durrant to investigate opening the coach park to improve access from Footbridge to The Arches.

Andrew Durrant then showcased the events taking place in Windsor:

- 18 June 2023: Second Wind Band
- 25 June 2023: Windsor Community Orchestra
- 1 July 2023: St Margaret's Band
- 2 July 2023: Wycombe High School
- 15 July 2023: BWCB Concert Band
- 16 July 2023: Burnham Concert Band
- 22 July 2023: The Sound Crowd
- 23 July 2023: Middlesex Yeomanry Concert Band
- 29 July: Cholsey and Wallingford Concert Band
- 20 July 2023: Trinity Concert Band
- 6 August 2023: Woodley Concert Band
- 12 August 2023: The Fabulosos Big Band
- 13 August 2023: Waltham St Lawrence Silver Band
- 9 September 2023: Barnes Concert Band
- 10 September 2023: RAF Halton Voluntary Band

Town Manager Update

This item had been combined with 'Item 4 – Windsor Events and Projects' due to Paul Roach being unavailable.

Heathrow Airport

Andy Knight, Heathrow Airport, gave a presentation on Heathrow Airport's operations. He informed that he worked in the Communities and Sustainability Team, where his main role was talking about Heathrow's operations and its impact on communities.

Andy Knight explained where residents could find operational tools and information about Heathrow on their website. On hethrow.com/noise, residents could look information on the planes flying, air routes and altitudes. They could also raise complaints on noise through a phone number, email address and web form. Residents could also acquire news on various operational impacts which may affect them. In addition, the website revealed plans seeking to reduce noise pollution.

Andy Knight then drew attention to various apps which residents could use:

- WebTrak – track planes travelling to and from Heathrow.
- WebTrack 'My Neighbourhood' – a related app which illustrate trends in flights over a number of months.
- xPlane – illustrates Heathrow flight distribution over specific locations.

Andy Knight then informed that an extensive section of Heathrow's website contained other operational information, such as flight paths, rules around night flight, runway alternation, how wind directions affect flight paths, how the historic Cranford Agreement affect easterly operations, and ground noise. The website included videos explaining this information.

Andy Knight then explained that there were plans to introduce easterly alternation as part of the airport expansion project, but this had paused due to the Covid pandemic. To enact easterly alternation, a planning application had to be submitted to Hillingdon Borough Council as well as submit an airspace change to the Civil Aviation Authority.

Andy Knight also explained that there were community forums to allow Heathrow to connect and engage with residents on various issues. He also informed that residents could find Heathrow's Noise Action Plan. He then briefly explained Heathrow's noise strategy and Airspace Modernisation Strategy.

Councillor Wisdom Da Costa asked what the cost would be for the installation of the new taxiways. Andy Knight replied that he did not know the cost, but he offered to find out the figure and reply back outside of the meeting.

ACTION: Andy Knight to forward to Councillor Da Costa on the cost of the new taxiways at Heathrow.

Richard Endacott, a resident, asked if Heathrow was able to mitigate when warm weather was predicted. Andy Knight replied that Heathrow could not; rather it depended on wind direction, not temperature. For reasons of safety, Andy Knight explained, aircraft had to land and take off into the wind. He also informed that Heathrow enacted 'Westerly preference' where if the wind blow was low, the western runway was used.

When asked by Richard Endacott on whether Heathrow could use the southern runway, Andy Knight explained that it could not be used for landings due to the historical Cranford Agreement. In spite of the agreement having expired, Heathrow had to go through the planning process with Hillingdon Council to enable the groundworks. In addition, Heathrow had to go through the airspace change process to enable departures and airspace.

Nigel Griffin, a resident, was critical with the Heathrow update. He asserted that there were promises to address the easterly operations, and criticised Heathrow's long-term plans which would be completed by 2029 as well as the long planning process to place tarmac on the southern runway. Andy Knight replied that easterly alternation remained a key commitment. He added that the first planning application to Hillingdon Borough was turned down, which was then taken up to a planning enquiry; therefore, extending the period. In the end, Heathrow won the inquiry through appeal and permission was granted. Plans commenced for a third runway expansion, but the Covid pandemic had put those plans hold on. As a result, the planning permission from Hillingdon expired, and therefore Heathrow had to start the process again, a timeframe set by government.

Andy Knight also explained that the southern runway could be used in an emergency, but it could not be used for prolonged periods of time without permission from Hillingdon.

Councillor Knowles asked if Andy Knight could attend the Aviation Forum. Andy Knight welcomed the opportunity.

Sarah Walker, a resident, asked how Windsor could access some of the funds for community projects. Andy Knight replied that this could be found of the Heathrow Community Trusts website where residents could find information on how to apply as well as how funds had been allocated around Heathrow, including Windsor, such as village halls and schools.

Windsor Consultations

No new consultations were raised.

Resident Questions and Item Suggestions for Next Forum

The Chair informed that she wanted to make the Forum more inclusive to residents.

Jess Hunter, a resident, raised the issue of traffic through the Town Centre and Park Street, namely the issue of buses and taxis parked along Park Street.

Councillor Tisi highlighted some suggested items from the minutes from the previous meeting. These included management and planting of trees, the state of the Windsor Leisure Centre, repair and maintenance of highways, and family services.

Jim O'Shea, a resident, expressed preference for items which were resident-focused, such as infrastructure and transport, rather than tourist-related items, and cover the whole of Windsor

rather than the Town Centre. The Chair agreed that she would like to ensure that there were topics which covered the whole of Windsor and not just the Town Centre.

Anna Leonard, a resident, raised the issue of litter, namely litter scattered everywhere and overflowing litter bins. Councillor Knowles pointed out that there was a presentation on litter in the previous Forum meeting and that it mentioned a call back. The Chair added that residents could report issues like this to Councillors and the RBWM website.

Clare Milne, a resident, asked about adding an item on a Windsor Town Council. Councillor Karen Davies, the Lead Member for a Windsor Town Council, was in attendance to give a summary relating to a Windsor Town Council. She confirmed that the Borough was committed to conducting a community governance review on the unparished areas of Windsor, and that she would forward a motion to Full Council to start the process at the earliest opportunity.

Councillor Karen Davies added that much of the previous community governance review and evidence would be able to be carried forward. However, legally, a new review had to take place because a community governance review had to start and finish within twelve months (the previous review expired a couple of years ago). In addition, another review could not take place for another two years; however, the two-year expiry timeframe would end in July 2023. From there, a new review would take place with information and evidence from the previous governance review. Once the review started, a terms of reference would be agreed and the process would be completed within the 12 month timeframe. The established parish and town councils in the Borough would provide a framework.

Councillor Davies then explained the powers would be subjected to negotiation between the Borough and the new town council. These would be in line with other parish councils, namely starting small and gradually acquiring more powers and responsibilities.

Councillor Davies directed residents to the draft recommendations from the previous community governance review which were still on the RBWM website under Community Governance Review.

Peter Kingswood, a resident, suggested that Windsor Town Forum should be renamed to ‘New Windsor Forum’. He argued that the name ‘Windsor Town Forum’ gave the impression that it should focus on the Town Centre rather than the rest of Windsor. He also conveyed that the Windsor Town Forum encompassed the entirety of the former local authority in New Windsor and thus the Forum should have the name of this former authority. The Chair reassured that the Forum covered the whole Windsor area and not only the Town Centre.

Another resident expressed concern that there was a lack of coordination from the Highways Department whereby decisions focus on one part of Windsor and not the whole of Windsor and without consideration on the impact of other residents, such as residents along the A308. She also highlighted that the impact of the coach car park.

Regarding the point that the Forum was too focused on the Town Centre, Councillor Knowles proposed that the Forum should be named the ‘Windsor Forum’, which could then change perceptions that Forum encompasses the whole of Windsor. Councillor Da Costa seconded this proposal. The Chair and Laurence Ellis, Democratic Services Officer, pointed out that this would need to be investigated on whether a name change required a constitutional change.

ACTION: The Forum to investigate and change the name of Windsor Town Forum to ‘Windsor Forum’.

Nigel Griffin highlighted that there were parish councils which made comments on planning permissions, namely whether they supported or opposed them, and suggested that the Forum could do something similar. He also suggested that a specialist from the Planning Department could attend and explain their plans for the future, arguing that planning operation in the Borough was inefficient.

Councillor Tisi replied that there were potential conflicts of interest as some members of the Forum were members of the Windsor Development and Management (Planning) Panel. However, this was something which could be investigated.

As the installation of a Town Council would take years, up until next local elections, Councillor Da Costa suggested for the next agenda that the Forum could have some transition powers with residents having some participation. The Chair highlighted in the section in RBWM's Constitution on Area Forums whereby the Area Forum was given some powers to spend money in unparished as delegated by Cabinet resolution in relation to local residents, businesses and organisations. She stated that this was something which could be investigated.

ACTION: The Forum to investigate with Cabinet on the Forum's delegated powers.

Jim O'Shea suggested that the Forum format could change the format, such as external attendees speaking or presenting for 10-15 minutes. Nigel Griffin also suggested that the information should be provided in advance of the hearing. The Chair agreed that the format could have some improvements and that some items should focus on the future rather than the past.

After expressing appreciation with the Forum, Sarah Walker, a resident, asked a couple of questions. Firstly, she asked the Windsor Councillors what were top three projects in which they would endorse to secure the economic future of Windsor. Secondly, she highlighted that Windsor had many internet and digital infrastructure blackspots, asking who would handle this and how would this be done.

The Chair responded that the projects regarding economic growth which the Windsor Councillors endorsed could be discussed at the next meeting. Regarding on who would handle digital infrastructure, Andrew Durrant stated that digital strategy would sit under the remit of the Infrastructure Team.

ACTION: Councillors members of the Forum to state their top three projects they would endorse to help economic growth in Windsor.

Regarding the Town Forum possessing delegated budget powers, John Webb asked what sort of budget was possible for 2023 when the budget had already been approved. Councillor Da Costa replied that there were grants available from central government which unparished areas benefit from. Adding to his suggestion on the Forum having transitional powers, he suggested to ask an officer on what budgets were available.

ACTION: The Forum to investigate what budgets were available.

On planning, Clare Milnes asked whether interest groups could regularly give feedback on planning applications to the Forum, primarily on the major applications. Councillor Knowles suggested that how parish councils handle budgets and planning applications could be investigated.

Teresa Haggart, a resident who was chair of the Windsor and Eton Society Heritage and Environment Committee, expressed a couple of concerns on having planning applications to the Forum. She stated that discussing planning applications at the Town Forum would be premature, and that the Forum meetings would be dominated by discussions on them. She argued that the Forum would not be an appropriate place and it would be better at a Town Council.

Teresa Haggart also raised a concern that there was a lack of conservation and enforcement officers in Windsor to maintain heritage and conservation sites.

Agreeing with Teresa Haggart, Councillor Knowles suggested that the Windsor and Eton Society filters planning applications which they were concerned about to be considered by the Forum and then they themselves present the issue.

Councillor Tisi suggested that the Forum should focus on the major and controversial applications, and the Forum could compile the comments and then forward them to the planning the department.

Item suggestions:

- Traffic in Windsor
- Pollution monitoring levels
- Management of existing trees and the planting of new ones
- State of Windsor Leisure Centre
- Repair and maintenance of local highways
- Support provided to Family Services Unit
- Management of Highways

Dates of Future Meetings

The Forum noted that the next meeting would be held on 18 July 2023 at 6:30pm. The Chair proposed that all future meetings be in-person with a hybrid/virtual attendance option. Councillor Tisi seconded this proposal.

AGREED UNANIMOUSLY: All future Windsor Town Forum meetings to be in-person at York House, Windsor.

The Chair asked if residents would like an item for the Vision for Windsor to which residents confirmed.

ACTION: Vision for Windsor to be added to the next meeting agenda.

The meeting, which began at 6.31 pm, finished at 8.47 pm

Chair…….

Date…….....